Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

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Water shortage persists

Time to review water use priorities

Even with a damp ending to another rainy season, water rationing and water-use surcharges may still be necessary. While the rain is not sinking in, the concept of seriously cutting back on water use may be. The current water shortage is a reminder that our traditional indulgence in imported water and heavy use of our own underground supplies is not sustainable.

The need to change our habits is clear. Landscape use of so-called "gray water" from showers, tubs, and clothes washers is now legal and encouraged in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties where the drought has struck the hardest. While this practice is currently illegal in Los Angeles County, the Board of Supervisors and the Department of Health Services are discussing policy changes.

The amount of residential water used outdoors has been estimated at 50 percent or more. Thus, reducing landscape water use can cut overall water consumption.

Water conserving methods

For starters, eliminating large expanses of lawn is now being encouraged. Drip irrigation delivers water to a specific spot, avoiding loss to evaporation and gaps in the landscape. Combined with heavy mulching, these procedures can reduce water usage considerably.

But continued drought may require more drastic steps. At some point it may no longer be feasible to maintain every plant now in the garden even with drip irrigation. Prioritizing may become a necessity.

Another alternative might be pruning. Thinning branches from remaining plants reduces the leaf area available for transpiration, the natural movement of water out of tiny openings in the leaf. In conjunction with drip irrigation and pruning, selective plant removal would be the next step. Removing duplicate plants in a mass planting reduces the number of roots competing for water.

Assessing plant priorities

A homeowner's priorities would dictate water use: front yard landscapes, a favorite fruit tree, a specimen shade tree, a much-needed privacy hedge, or a prized bed of azaleas. Location, age, dollar value and beauty all figure into the equation. The point is that we may be faced with such decisions in the near future, and setting priorities might be tough.

The Arboretum and the other county gardens are not exempt. In fact, as "agricultural" facilities, the water rationing could cut deeper. What will the gardens do if faced with a worst case scenario?

Using the 127-acre Arboretum as an example, what if there is just not enough water to keep the entire facility lush and green? How might we assign priorities? One approach might be to look for species that recur in several spots on the grounds. Do we need them all? Do individual plants need pruning or selective thinning? An existing, computerized database of the collections would point to such water conservation possibilities. Perhaps it will make sense to water more heavily in the most popular areas or those closest to the central hub of the garden. Collections of endangered species, such as the palm-like cycads, might deserve special consideration. The final decisions will not be easy.

Reviewing collection policies

At this time, the Departmental Collections Policy is under review to provide contemporary guidelines for review, renovation, and reorganization of the plant collections. Water costs and availability will certainly flavor the final product. The garden's mandate will be to make the most efficient use of space, water, and plant materials while increasing the quality of the collections for visitors. Issues such as guidelines for selective thinning of mass plantings and removal of redundant collections must be addressed. Such changes will pave the way for reduced labor costs for the collections by grouping together plants with similar maintenance needs and keeping the meaningful at the expense of the marginal.

Other policies for review deal with the future of the current high-volume overhead irrigation system at the Arboretum. Drip irrigation is now being used successfully on a limited scale. Priorities for pruning may be affected by water conservation as well as beauty and safety. Such approaches, coupled with mulching to retain soil moisture, will go a long way toward making it possible to keep our collections attractive and healthy despite water limitations.

It's time to consider plans for a future in which special plants and garden collections are selectively green. Quality rather than quantity may govern development of "oasis gardens" in Southern California homes, parks and botanical gardens by the end of the 20th Century.

The author, James Bauml, is senior biologist on the Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens staff.

Water Conservation Symposium

Moderator:
Dr. Steve Cohan
Superintendent,
Descanso Gardens

LEARN ABOUT:

- Economics of an efficient garden
- Proper plant selection
- Planting to your specifications
- Lawn substitutes

WHEN: Saturday, May 11 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

WHERE: Lecture Hall, Los Angeles State & County Arboretum

COST: CAF MEMBERS: $15
Non-members $20
Lunch available for $8
Contact: Foundation Office
(818) 447-8207

Los Angeles State & County Arboretum

301 N. Baldwin Ave.
Arcadia, CA

Robinson Gardens inaugurates school tours

A new window on the Virginia Robinson Gardens will open for children this fall when, for the first time, docents will guide groups of third graders through the garden. Forty prospective docents to lead the tours are now being recruited for the inaugural program. Training begins in May, according to Joan Selwyn, founder of the Friends of Robinson Gardens.

Patricia Isaac, chair of the children's program, is developing the program with the help of assistant chair, Pauline Mayer, and John Copeland, supervisor of Robinson Gardens. Docent training will be under the direction of Barbara Namerow.

Format of the tours is as unusual as the features at the historic Virginia Robinson Gardens. One or two docents will lead groups of about 10 children to special interest areas where they will focus on the garden's unique attributes: the palm garden, rose garden, herb garden, and the historical and social milieu of the estate during the span of Virginia Robinson's long life. As a bonus, children will also learn about seed propagation and receive a seedling to take home.

To prepare for the tours, docents will participate in a 10-week training program led by experts in various fields. Teddy Colbert, author and specialist in childhood gardening, Shirley Kerins, curator of the herb garden at Huntington Gardens, rosarian Tom Carruth from Weeks Roses, author and palm expert Don Hodel, and John Copeland are among the horticultural professionals enlisted as instructors.

After completing the training in late summer, docents will lead at least one of the hour-long tours each month. For information about joining the program, call (213) 276-5367.

Horticultural Fair planned at Descanso Gardens

The first Horticultural Fair at Descanso Gardens will be held April 27 and 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Members of plant societies, commercial horticultural firms, and the cooperative extension services will be present to answer individual questions about garden care.

"This educational and informational event will be an outstanding opportunity for home gardeners to ask the assembled experts about their specific garden problems," Dr. Steven Cohan, superintendent of Descanso Gardens, explained. "As far as we know, this will be a horticultural event different from anything that has been held in Los Angeles, and we hope to conduct it yearly."

Experts from rose, iris, camellia, and other plant societies will be located at booths on the Main Lawn. Other experts representing lawn, fertilizer, pest control, irrigation, and tree culture will also be present.

Dr. Steve Cohan (center) examines plants held by Janet Nickerman (left) and Michelle Riffle. Dr. Cohan will be one of the experts at Descanso Gardens' Horticultural Fair April 27-28.

Gardens will hold two-day plant sales

Baldwin Bonanza XXI

Robert Smaus, author and awarding-winning Los Angeles Times garden editor will serve as honorary chairman of the 21st annual Baldwin Bonanza plant sale at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum.

Mr. Smaus will autograph copies of his latest book, "Planning and Planting the Garden," at a preview party on Friday, May 3, at 6:30 p.m.

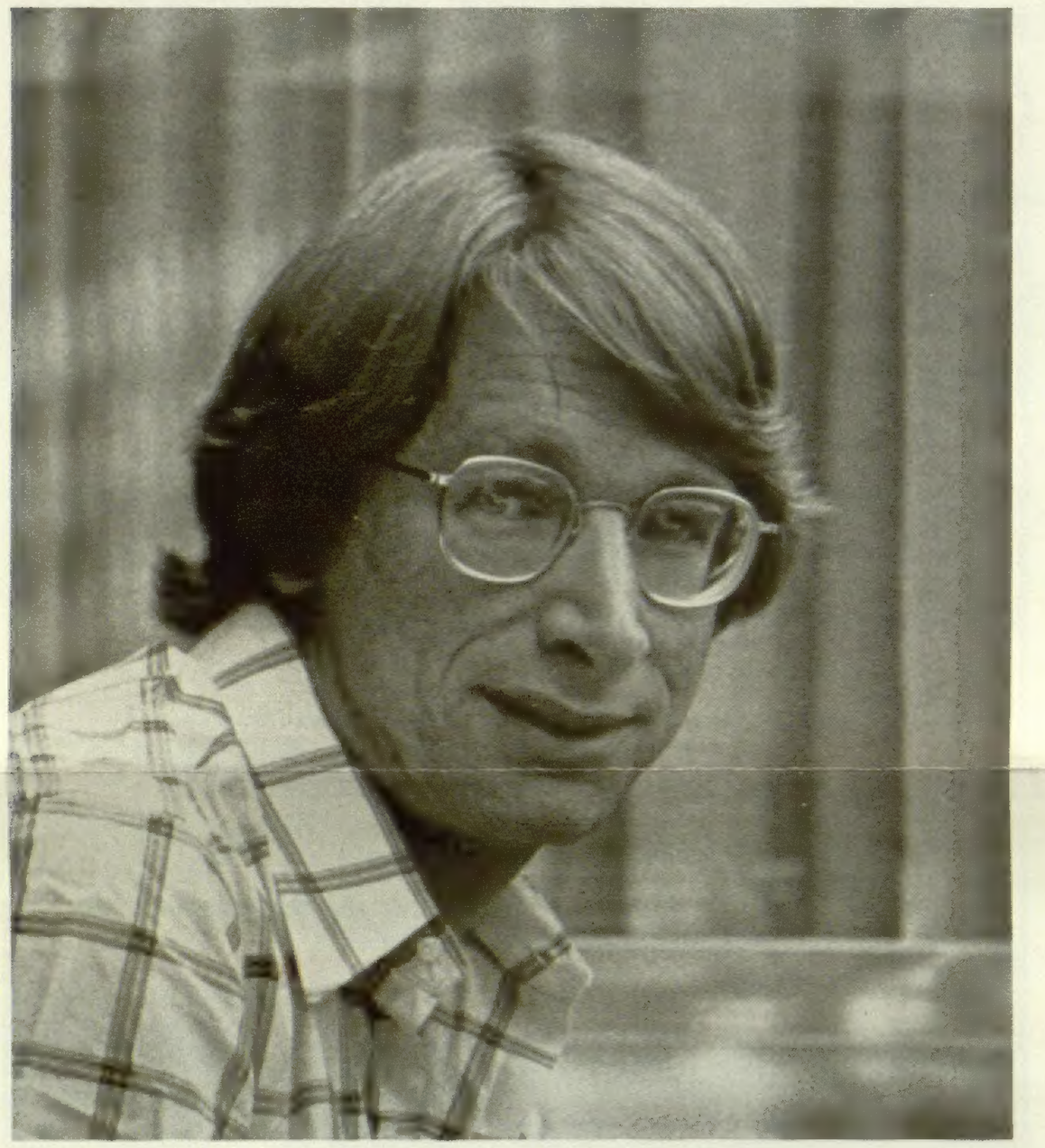

Photo courtesy of L.A. Times

Robert Smaus

At this time, California Arboretum Foundation members can meet Mr. Smaus. Those members who contribute $250 or more are invited to a reception at 5:30 p.m. honoring Mr. Smaus. For information about Foundation membership call (818) 447-8207.

The sale is open to the public May 4-5 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Traditionally a one-day event, the sale was extended this year to include several garden tours and lectures on Saturday.

"A Springtime Festival of Plants" is the theme of Baldwin Bonanza XXI, where thousands of plants will be on sale. Educational activities this year include frequent guided tours of the Arboretum's water conservation garden that showcases a landscape of mature water-wise plants like those on sale. Plant experts will also be on hand with advice and answers to gardeners' questions.

Saturday features lectures at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. by Arboretum superintendent John Provine. He will discuss the net bush *(Calothamnus)*, a drought-tolerant Australian plant tested and introduced into local nurseries by the Arboretum.

All day Saturday representatives from Monrovia Nursery of Azusa, Magic Growers of Pasadena and Desert to Jungle Nursery of Montebello will also hold informal discussions. Each nursery will focus on the background and cultural needs of the specialty plants they are offering for sale at Baldwin Bonanza.

Fiesta de Flores

"Fiesta de Flores," the annual fundraiser sponsored by South Coast Botanic Garden, will celebrate spring with music, food and flowers on May 18-19 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Music by the Palos Verdes Symphonic Band will accompany shoppers as they stroll along the garden pathways, deciding on the perfect garden accessory or tool to buy from sales booths.

Because of December frosts and water shortages, the selection of plants will be limited and shoppers are encouraged to come early for the best selections.

Cultivars of rosemary that are not generally available to the public, lily of the Nile *(Agapanthus)*, bougainvillea and succulents will be some of the water-wise plants that will be available. Once established, these plants need little water during the summer months.

Clubs like the South Coast African Violet Society, South Coast Bonsai Association and the South Bay Bromeliad Associates will sell their speciality plants and answer questions on plant care.

Benefit tour of Westside gardens planned

Friends of Robinson Gardens have scheduled their annual benefit garden tour for May 10. The tour features five magnificent West Los Angeles gardens and a day of activities at Virginia Robinson Gardens in Beverly Hills.

Purchasers of the $100 tickets may visit the five gardens at their leisure anytime between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The designer will be present at each garden for informal discussions about plant materials, concept and completion of the landscape.

Activities at Robinson Gardens center around a high tea planned for the afternoon. Throughout the day guests may enjoy classical music and a boutique featuring garden related items. A display of table settings created by leading designers will grace the terrace of the mansion. The surrounding gardens, begun in 1911 by Mrs. Robinson, will also be open for tours.

Deadline for reservations is April 26. Call (213) 276-5367 for further information.

Heart patients stride through Arboretum

The Huntington Hospital cardiac department celebrated National Heart Week with a walk through the Arboretum on the morning of Feb. 12. About 75 rehabilitated cardiac patients took advantage of the Arboretum's rolling acres for their continuing exercise program. After each group completed the hour-long hike, they enjoyed a continental breakfast in the Peacock Cafe.

Zoo turtles find refuge at Descanso

More than 100 turtles found a new home at Descanso Gardens in March as the result of the Los Angeles Zoo's water conservation efforts.

The Zoo's Swan Lake, home to these red-eared, slider, painted, and soft-shelled turtles, was drained to save 25 million gallons of water annually.

The turtles were relocated to the newly completed 1.5 acre lake and bird sanctuary at Descanso Gardens.

"Our newly expanded, spring-fed lake and bird sanctuary will provide an excellent habitat for the L.A. Zoo's lake turtle population," said Dr. Steven Cohan, Descanso's superintendent. "Their protected environment will not be limited to the lake boundaries. It extends to the surrounding embankments densely planted with drought-tolerant California native plants. These include mahonia, toyon, lupines, manzanita, California poppies, and blue-eyed grass."

Prior to the draining of Swan Lake, the turtles were lured into wire cages baited with meat and fish. A crowd of television and newspaper reporters recorded their release when they arrived at Descanso Gardens. They join a resident population of koi and other fish, ducks, and migratory birds.

Kay Iizuka honored at South Coast Botanic Garden

About 300 of Kay Iizuka's friends and relatives and members of the community gathered at South Coast Botanic Garden Mar. 29 to dedicate a new juniper garden in his honor. Although illness prevented Mr. Iizuka from attending the ceremony, he was there in spirit and in the words of a letter he addressed to his old friend Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. Excerpts from his letter, reprinted in the program:

"I am extremely honored and privileged to have the Juniper Garden at the South Coast Botanical Gardens named as the Kay Iizuka Juniper Garden.

"Naming the garden at the South Coast means a great deal to me as you were very instrumental in converting the trash dump site into a unique and beautiful Botanical Garden.

"My involvement with the community is a result of my appointment as commissioner to serve with the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens."

Mr. Iizuka was Supervisor Hahn's first Japanese-American commission appointee when he named him to the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens Board of Governors in 1965. In the decades that followed, Mr. Iizuka, a respected member of the Southern California horticulture industry, provided professional guidance in the development of major projects at South Coast and the Japanese garden surrounding the tea house at Descanso Gardens.

As he presented a scroll to Ruby Iizuka, Supervisor Hahn commented on the other contributions her husband has made to Los Angeles County.

"Kay is a dedicated member of his community and his generous and tireless efforts have benefited many organizations such as the El Camino Lions Club, the Gardena Valley Gardeners Association and the Japanese Cultural Institute," he said.

Among his accomplishments was a popular Doll Show at South Coast that focused on the artistic heritage of Japan. For several years the show spotlighted lesser-known arts such as the exquisitely costumed Japanese kimekomi dolls, bonsai and flower arranging.

A tram tour and a visit to the newly-planted Kay Iizuka Juniper Garden followed the ceremony.

Above *Mistress of ceremonies, Julie Heimsheimer, (left) is president of the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens Board of Governors. Senior Deputy Leah Jeffries (right) represents Supervisor Deane Dana*

Below *Friends and family admire the scroll, from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors held by Supervisor Hahn.*

Above *Kay Iizuka (center) talks with Supervisor Kenneth Hahn (left) and Mrs. Iizuka at a community event.*

Donated fern replaces Descanso's frost victim

The death of a huge old staghorn fern at Descanso Gardens caused enough dismay to warrant a photograph in a Los Angeles Times story on December's "big freeze." Fortunately the story also resulted in donation of an even larger replacement fern to grace the Georgie Van de Kamp Hall courtyard.

The donation came through Martin Memmott with the Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Offices. When he read the Times story he thought of a staghorn *(Platycerium bifurcatum)* on his late parents' Huntington Beach property. His father, Rodney Memmott, an avid collector of succulents and unusual plants, had attached the fern to a magnolia tree in his garden in the early 1960s where it thrived through the years.

As it grows, this species of fern develops two types of leaves called fronds; sterile fronds form flat shields over the roots and fertile fronds project like antlers to give it both its common name and a botanical name that translates from the Greek as "broad horn divided into two parts."

An epiphyte like all of its kind, this staghorn fern used the tree only for support and didn't draw nutrients from its host. The plant in Rodney Memmott's garden had layered itself, shield upon shield, until it developed into a giant ball about 20 feet around.

"It's humungous," says Descanso Gardens Superintendent Dr. Steve Cohan. "You'll never see another one like it."

Because the fern weighed about 800 pounds, Descanso gardeners Mike Marshall, Peter Zabriskie and Ed Carrithers had to enlist the help of Tak Niiya and four South Coast Botanic Garden staffers. Together they levered the fern and attached sections of the magnolia tree, slated for removal by the property's developer, onto a truck for the trip to Descanso Gardens.

Now the tree trunk rests beside the court-

Descendents of Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Memmot encircle the huge staghorn fern the family donated to Descanso Gardens. From left are son Martin, grandson Grant Lindsey, daughters Bridgett Solley and Gayle Lindsey.

yard with chains stabilizing the top and the uppermost fronds of the fern almost reaching the rafters. Portable screens and heat lamps will be erected next winter to protect the valuable plant from future freezes.

How valuable is a staghorn fern this large? Dr. Cohan replies that, just as with any irreplaceable item, it's hard to guess how much a collector would be willing to pay. A fern dealer, on the other hand, could separate the hundreds and hundreds of shields that make up the sphere 8 feet in diameter and sell them as individual plants. *P. bifurcatum,* native to Australia and nearby islands, is a popular species and one of the easiest staghorns to grow.

Any question about the future of this fern has been settled however, now that it is permanently ensconced in Descanso Gardens. Thanks to a newspaper story and the generosity of Rodney Memmott's children, thousands of garden visitors can see this monument to the passage of time and a gardener's patient husbandry.

Authors to sign hummingbird book at Arboretum

Hummingbird experts Robert and Esther Tyrrell will sign copies of their latest book at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum gift shop April 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Hummingbirds of the Caribbean" is their second book to feature stroboscopic photographs of the tiny birds whose wings beat up to 78 times each second.

Their first book, "Hummingbirds and Their Behavior; A Study of North American Species," sold thousands of copies and is now in its eighth printing.

Robert Tyrrell pioneered a sophisticated light and camera system that allowed him to stop the motion of wings in mid-flight, showing in elegant detail feathers that may be only one-tenth of an inch long. His photographs capture the beauty that human eyes are too slow to see.

The text by Esther Tyrrell combines scientific descriptions and adventure tales. She describes each hummingbird species: appearance, behavior, habitat and preferred nectar sources. Stories of the obstacles they overcame to photograph the world's smallest birds make the beautiful color photographs even more incredible.

Hauling two tons of photographic gear past suspicious officials and crocodiles infesting Caribbean swamps was just the beginning. Then they had to locate and photograph tiny birds like the aptly named bee hummingbird that zip through miles of tropical rainforest every day.

The book signing April 28 provides a rare opportunity to meet this adventuresome couple who have included the Arboretum on their 18-city, nationwide tour.

Robert and Esther Tyrrell hold an enlargement of a photograph from their book "Hummingbirds of the Caribbean" that they will autograph April 28.

Exotic wasp expected to control whiteflies

The plague of the whiteflies that swarmed over Southern California for the last three years may finally be coming to an end with the help of a speck-sized wasp from Israel.

Encarsia sp., a natural enemy of the ash whitefly in the Middle East, lays her eggs inside the nymph of the whitefly. As they both grow, the wasp nymph consumes the whitefly nymph from the inside out, killing it as the wasp emerges.

To date the wasp has been released at 20 Southern California sites. Researchers are gaining control in targeted areas by inoculating each ash tree with about 250 wasps and monitoring the results. The State of California in conjunction with the University of Riverside are leaders in fighting the scourge. UCR has been doing extensive research on the wasp since 1989.

Because of the success rate with the wasp releases, R. Rosser Garrison of the Los Angeles County Agricultural Commissioners Office predicts that the whitefly population may be reduced to tolerable levels within two years.

Complete eradication will never happen because the wasps would starve if they wiped out all whiteflies. Because it is limited to one specific host, the wasp would, in effect, destroy its own species.

Homeowners eager for relief now must just be patient and maintain their trees properly. Good soil, deep watering, and washing the whiteflies off the undersides of leaves with plain water will help to alleviate infestations. Pesticides and last December's frosts had no lasting effect because so many new whiteflies came into the area and regenerated within a month.

With the patience of homeowners and continued efforts by entomologists, the ash tree will be around to welcome in the 21st Century.

Environmental Education Fair attracts 5,000

The 11th annual Environmental Education Fair attracted about 5,000 students, teachers and parents to the Arboretum on Mar. 16. The Fair, funded by the California Department of Education and supported by 14 local organizations, draws visitors from throughout Southern California. The next Fair is scheduled for Mar. 14, 1992.

The Oak Tree Foundation distributed about 150 trees to 60 classes and youth groups through a "Green City Grant" program at the Fair. Grant winners submitted a plan for planting and caring for up to five trees to celebrate Arbor Day. Proposals for the 1992 program will be accepted beginning in September, 1991.

Beverly Rouse, executive director of the California Arboretum Foundation, (left) and Richard Grant, president of the CAF Board of Trustees, (second from right) congratulate one of the classes who won trees for their school.

Three department veterans retire

Three long time employees of the gardens are bidding their farewells to plants, dirt and water for the good life of retirement.

Charles Vega, an Arboretum gardener, has been with the Arboretum since 1956. He started out as a Park Maintenance Man Helper and was promoted to gardener in 1958.

Lacy Betton started his garden career with South Coast Botanic Garden in 1975. In 1982 he was transferred to the Arboretum as a Grounds Maintenance Worker. Before jointing the gardens, Lacy was self-employed as a landscape gardener. Lacy and his wife, Geneva, live in Los Angeles where they divide their time between Lacy's plumbing business and trips to Las Vegas.

Descanso Gardens is saying goodbye to Joe Macias. Joe started with the County in 1956 and came to the Arboreta Department in 1958 as a Park Maintenance Man Helper. In 1966 he was promoted to gardener and spent all his years at Descanso.

The Department extends a fond goodbye and wishes for years of good luck to three valuable County employees who promise to come back and visit soon.

Joe Macias

Lacy Betton

Charles Vega

New ordinance restricts photography at gardens

New regulations that govern professional photographers using the County gardens have recently been put into effect.

One policy change restricts wedding photography at County gardens. Commercial photographers will no longer be permitted to use the gardens as settings for wedding portraits on Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays.

To use the facilities on week days, commercial still photographers must buy a $100 annual certificate and pay a $15 application fee for each session. The annual certificates, which take about two days to process, can be obtained at the Los Angeles County Film Office, 6922 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 606, Hollywood, CA 90028. For more information call (213) 957-1000.

In addition, they must contact the garden of their choice in advance to schedule the photo session, complete a photography contract and pay a location fee ranging from $100 to $250. To make these arrangements, photographers must call the particular facility where the photographs will be taken.

The revised County ordinance also governs television and movie filming at all County-owned facilities. The revisions were approved by the County Board of Supervisors to establish an equitable filming fee structure and establish a "one step" process for issuing filming permits.

GARDEN EVENTS

April 27-28 — **Rose Show**
Arboretum
Sat. 2-4 p.m., Sun. 9-4:30 p.m.
Pacific Rose Society
Features hybrid teas, floribundas, miniatures. Minis and full-sized cultivars for sale.

May 4-5 — **Baldwin Bonanza XXI**
Arboretum
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Benefit plant sale, mostly water-wise plants and Arboretum introductions.
Preview party May 3.

May 11-12 — **Geranium Show**
Descanso Gardens
Sat. 12-4:30., Sun. 10-4:30 p.m.
LA Branch of Intnl Geranium Society Mothers Day show and sale features regal, zonal scented & dwarf types.

May 18-19 — **Fiesta de Flores**
South Coast Botanic Garden
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days
Benefit plant and equipment sale. Plant clubs offer exhibits and expertise on their chosen plants.

May 11 — **Water Conservation Symposium**
Arboretum Lecture Hall
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Learn economics, plant selection, lawn care & substitutes to save water. Call for $20 reservations.

June 8-16 — **Bonsai Show**
Descanso Gardens
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day
Descanso Bonsai Society
Largest outdoor show of mini ature trees in U.S. Demonstration Sat. & Sun. Plants and materials for sale.

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